

I refer to these subjects in my letter to Chairmen BOXER and MICA below, but this Congress has proven it can provide certainty and bipartisanship when it passed a four-year Federal Aviation Administration law. It took five years and 23 short-term extensions, but this Congress was able to get the job done. It should be the goal of this Congress to achieve similar success this year with a multi-year transportation bill.

MAY 8, 2012.

Hon. JOHN L. MICA,  
*Chairman, Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure, Washington, DC.*

Hon. BARBARA BOXER,  
*Chairman, Environment & Public Works, Washington, DC.*

DEAR CHAIRMAN MICA, CHAIRMAN BOXER, AND CONFEREES, our country as a whole is in need of a long, multi-year surface transportation authorization bill. This long-term certainty will allow our state departments of transportation to truly address our infrastructure needs and not push them off down the road until it is too late and too expensive. Our country is closing in on \$16 trillion in debt—totaling more than \$50,000 per American. We must invest wisely, while also coming to grips with our fiscal situation. I would like to share with you some priorities from the people I have the privilege of representing.

When the near-trillion dollar stimulus was signed into law in 2009, many citizens wondered why Congress was not focused on a true job-creating measure like a long-term highway plan. The fact that such a small percentage of the stimulus plan was devoted to transportation and infrastructure represents an unfortunate missed opportunity, especially at a time when our infrastructure is rated as “D” by the American Society of Civil Engineers and construction unemployment in the industry is 14.5 percent. The time to focus on a long-term transportation bill is now.

The certainty that a long-term bill will provide would allow programs like the Projects of National and Regional Significance to help build much-needed infrastructure in our country. Projects that fall in this category are high in cost and large in scope and for that reason federal support is necessary for them to go forward. These projects affect localities directly through economic development and more jobs. I encourage you to continue to support the Projects of National and Regional Significance program within the surface transportation authorization bill you are currently conferring. Projects that do not reach the threshold of National and Regional Significance, such as

highway expansions and overpasses, can bring in a great amount of economic development as well. We must continue to support programs and grants that would allow these projects to go forward so they are not politicized.

Another important issue for Illinois is our rail system. We are at a crossroads for this mode of transportation, and it is vital that we take care of that infrastructure so that existing lines which contribute to both commuter mobility and freight shipments are not shortchanged. Rail allows people and products to travel to and from all over the country, and from there to ports across the world. While we must be careful to separate needs from wants, growth in our economy and long-term sustainability must always weigh heavily when making decisions on infrastructure priorities.

I also encourage you to include provisions that would address the job-creating Keystone Pipeline. This pipeline and other projects like it can help ease global energy strains due to our reliance on oil from foreign countries. Pipelines are the energy lifelines of our country and will not only address access to oil, but will also encourage job growth and therefore growth in our economy. This is a project that has the support of Republicans, Democrats, labor and business.

Another important issue that we must not overlook is our locks and dams. These vital pieces of our infrastructure need to have dedicated work and funding. After all, this infrastructure is vital to both commerce and jobs. More than 30,000 workers are employed on vessels and an additional 800,000 jobs are dependent on our waterways. That is why I support the continued inclusion of the RAMP Act, H.R. 104, in the final Surface Transportation bill. This would guarantee that the total amount available for spending from the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund be equal to the Trust Fund receipts as estimated by the President's budget for that year. This is important to addressing our nation's dredging requirements and keeps our ports and waterways at a competitive advantage with the rest of the world's waterways.

I also support the inclusion of the bipartisan, House-passed H.R. 2273, the Coal Residuals Reuse and Management Act, into a final transportation package. There are many types of projects across this great country that require the use of concrete, and proposed regulations on coal ash can be detrimental to getting our economy back on track and our infrastructure back up to the appropriate safety standards. This is symptomatic of large issues of overregulation that place unnecessary hindrances on meeting our infrastructure needs.

Finally, I encourage you to carefully consider the need for farmers to transport all

farm supplies from any distribution point to a local farm retailer or end consumer. The restriction to a single farm supply excludes multiple other critical farm supplies and severely hinders the flexibility of farmers during planting and harvesting season. The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration has granted several waivers over the last two years because it has recognized the need to exempt these supplies. Please consider making this exemption of agriculture hours of service permanent.

Conventional wisdom is that Congress cannot get anything done, but in the spirit of Mark Twain, I believe that reports on the death of bipartisanship have been greatly exaggerated. After all, it was this Congress that advanced three market-opening trade agreements, passed the VOW to Hire Heroes jobs bill for veterans, passed the STOCK Act, passed a Defense Authorization that will benefit manufacturing and our industrial base, and passed the Jumpstart our Business Startups legislation. These are all now the law of the land and were accomplished through bipartisanship. Perhaps one of the best examples is the four-year Federal Aviation Administration reauthorization. It took five years and 23 short-term extensions, but this Congress finally got the job done. It should be the goal of this Congress to achieve similar success this year with a multi-year transportation bill.

I appreciate your time and consideration of my concerns and the priorities of the 17th District of Illinois.

Sincerely,

BOBBY SCHILLING,  
*House of Representatives.*

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

#### HON. LOUISE McINTOSH SLAUGHTER

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, May 30, 2012*

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably detained and missed rollcall vote Nos. 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292 and 293. Had I been present, I would have voted “aye” on rollcall vote Nos. 270, 273, 275, 276, 278, 279, 282, 284, 285, 287, 289, 290, and 293. Had I been present, I would have voted “no” on rollcall vote Nos. 271, 272, 274, 277, 280, 281, 283, 286, 288, 291, and 292.